

eating with the enemy

you hypocrite!



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The problem with Peter

The complaint that "Christians are just hypocrites" goes back a long way! In Galatians 2, Paul tells us about a very public confrontation he had with his colleague Peter. Quite bluntly, Paul calls Peter a hypocrite - someone who says one thing, and does another. The irony is, Peter's hypocrisy is that he's doing something that looks socially RIGHT rather than something that looks WRONG. Trouble is, social rights and wrongs have somehow been turned upside down by the gospel.

LIVING TODAY: What sort of behaviour do people usually identify with Christian hypocrisy?

What motivates hypocrisy? Why are Christians so often guilty of it?

Read about Paul's showdown with Peter in Galatians 2:11-21.

What is it about Peter's actions that make him a hypocrite? What's so wrong about what he's done?

What is he afraid of?

What does this show about the extent of the tensions over gentiles coming into the church?

An Apostle - Afraid?

This is remarkable! Peter, the leader of the Jerusalem apostles, is quivering in his boots. He has buckled under pressure. Look back at his bold words in Acts 15 (see below) to see him in a better light...

What Peter used to say (Acts 15:7-11)

What Peter used to do (Gal 2:12)

What Peter did under pressure (Gal 2:12b)

What Paul says to Peter (Gal 2:14-16)



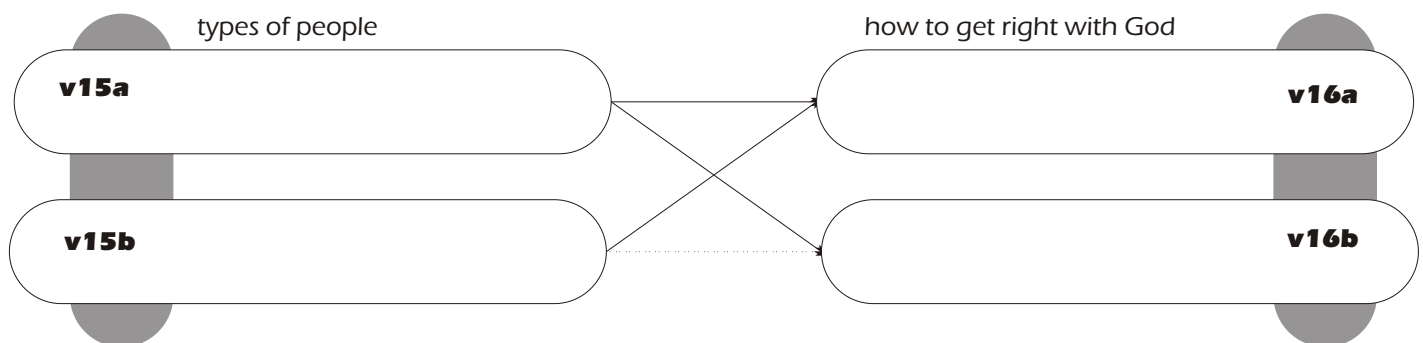
Think Again...

Sometimes we assume very few Jews became followers of Jesus. The reality is different. It seems that in Jerusalem, many Jews were persuaded by the evidence of the resurrection that Jesus was the Messiah.

Sometimes we assume the main opposition to Paul (and Peter) came from Jews who did NOT believe in Jesus. But the evidence from Acts 15:5 and Acts 21:20-21 gives a different picture. According to James, "Many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law."

Their zeal for the law is what puts them in conflict with Paul. Their zeal for the law - and their desire not be contaminated by eating with "Gentile sinners" - is also what makes Peter fear them... and turn into a hypocrite!

According to Paul's words to Peter, there are two kinds of people in the world, and two ideas about how to get right with God. Fill in the gaps below...



Carefully follow Paul's logic in verses 14 to 18. Answer these questions by drawing firm lines between the boxes above - it will help if you have two different coloured pens.

- a) How have JEWS like Peter and Paul been saved? (Use a blue pen)
- b) Who will NOT be justified by observing the law? (Use a red pen)
- c) How have the GENTILE SINNERS in the church been saved? (Use a blue pen)
- d) What have Peter and the "men from James" been forcing the Gentiles to do?(Use red)
- e) Because Jews and "Gentile Sinners" are saved the same way (and Christian Jews start to look like "Gentile sinners") , Paul - and Christ - are open to an accusation from Jews who want to follow the other path. What is the accusation?

The fact is, says Paul, going back to THE LAW is the path that makes sin obvious! Rebuilding the law just highlights their guilt under the law all over again. (v18)

Gentile Christians have been saved by faith in Christ, just like Peter and Paul were - and the Old Testament law played no part. So, says Paul, we must not act in a way that says or even hints at the fact that the Gentiles need to NOW take on the law to be acceptable. It's not as if gentiles are "saved by faith" and then have to "live by law."

Read what Paul says in verses 19 to 21...

According to Paul, when Christ died for him, he died with Christ. As Christ “represents him,” and “stands in for him,” he is counted as having died himself. Verse 19 and 20 both talk about “dying” then “living.” Fill in the gaps...

v19		
v20		
	dead	alive

- What do you think it means to “die to the law”? (v19)
- What will “living for God” look like, according to the parallel statement above?
- Will “living for God” involve taking on the Old Testament law? Why, or why not?
- According to the second half of verse 20, what will the daily life of a Christian look like? What will our reference point be if it is not the law?

Still chained today?

In what ways are we Christians today in danger of “rebuilding the law”?

Most people think “being a Christian” means “keeping the ten commandments and being good.” How does this idea “set aside the grace of God?” (v21)

How do you think this idea became so widespread?

What does Paul say to people who think this way? (v21)

To Peter, refusing to eat with the Gentiles seemed innocent. But he was ultimately denying grace. In what ways can our actions today be seen to do the same thing?

What place does the Old Testament law have in your life as a Christian? What do you think Paul would say to you?

Can you describe an example from your life of what it has meant to “live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” instead of living by rules or laws?

Avoiding Hypocrisy...

The most obvious kind of “christian hypocrisy” to avoid is that of claiming to follow Jesus while you continue in some kind of immorality. But there’s another sort of hypocrisy that’s just as dangerous and a little more subtle... living by “law,” and relying on your own efforts at goodness in a way that makes Christ’s death for you pointless. When you do that, you can actually look very good - in fact, you might even seem very religious.. But it’s a sort of hypocrisy to avoid at all costs!

